The Irresistible Church

Traits of a Church that Heaven Applauds

Intro:

This series will not just be a group of talks that we listen to and meditate on, and try to apply into our lives when we go home. I pray that this series will cause all of us, as one body of Christ, to reevaluate ourselves so that together we can make the changes needed in order to be a church, not that people applaud, but that HEAVEN applauds. Let’s not just look at our church’s success in terms of number, or lots of programs and ministries going on, but let’s evaluate the spiritual impact our church has- how many lives are being changed and whether the presence of God is TRULY in our midst.

The early church was the best example of a church that heaven applauds: Acts 2:42

42They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching([BE](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV" \l "cen-NIV-26992BE)) and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread([BF](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV#cen-NIV-26992BF)) and to prayer.([BG](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV#cen-NIV-26992BG)) 43Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.([BH](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV#cen-NIV-26993BH)) 44All the believers were together and had everything in common.([BI](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV#cen-NIV-26994BI)) 45They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.([BJ](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV#cen-NIV-26995BJ)) 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.([BK](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV#cen-NIV-26996BK)) They broke bread([BL](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV#cen-NIV-26996BL)) in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.([BM](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV#cen-NIV-26997BM)) And the Lord added to their number([BN](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&version=NIV#cen-NIV-26997BN)) daily those who were being saved.

* We do not want to make changes in order to attract **more people,** but rather, we want to make changes in order to attract **the presence of God** just as the early church.
* The “**Hand of God“** determines a churches success, not marketing, facilities, or programs
* Our job is to keep ourselves **postured for His grace – just as the early church-** and we’re going to talk about just how to do that in this series.
* An irresistible church is not a perfect church, rather it is constantly aligning itself to **please God.** These kinds of churches are not stagnant, but always changing and being prayerful about what to do next. (difference between changes of dogma and changes in the church to make the church more right with God)
* ***James 4:8 “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.”*** We often look at this verse for us as individuals, but for this series, we are going to talk about the specific things that we, as a church, can do to draw near to Him.
* The closer we draw to God, the more He is able to use us for His glory. And isn’t that what we want for our church? To be a lighthouse? To bring more and more people to know Him and be part of His kingdom?

**What does an irresistible church look like?**

1. **You grow spiritually.**
* Provides spiritual education grounded in Biblical principles
* A place where you can participate in corporate worship
* Provides opportunities to fellowship with other believers
1. **You witness a strong sense of mission.**
* You see fruit of people converting, lives being transformed, marriages healed, and new leaders being discipled.
1. **You long to attend this church every week**
* you want to be involved in this church because you know good things happen within and around an irresistible church (ie tiny hut churches in Africa that people would walk miles to get to)
1. **You want to invest in this church for the long haul.**
* There’s a strong sense of satisfaction you feel being connected to this church.
1. **You tell others about this church.**
* You have a healthy pride in your church and you want to invite other believers and even non believers
1. **You relax at this church, knowing it’s a model of growth, not perfection.**
* “We’re all in this together.” You don’t feel the need to be perfect in order to feel accepted.
1. **You are delightfully challenged at this church**
* You leave different than you arrived. You are inspired to live differently because of what you have been taught.

If we take a look at these characteristics, we can honestly say that there are some things our church is strong at, and other things that we need to work on We want to be like that church!- The stop of Abouna Zakaria – presence of God will draw you in. you’ll know it

Because a church is made up of people- you guys- all of us have a responsibility in making our church become irresistible to heaven.

As we go through this series and talk about the traits of the irresistible church, it is your responsibility to take the principles we outline and talk about them with the people in your spheres of influence.

**What does a church need to get from point A to point B?**

1. **The Will to Change**
* this requires our work and commitment
* the road to becoming an irresistible church does not happen without effort and even a bit of discomfort.
* We shouldn’t be afraid of change, because change helps us to adapt, and grow, and reach new people in new ways.
1. **The Holy Spirit**
* Change MUST be empowered by the Holy Spirit because TRUE transformation is not man made, but if we do not make the commitment and the effort, the Holy Spirit cannot work through us. So as you listen to this series, do not just listen passively, but listen PRAYERFULLY.
* “An idea must enter a person’s head in the form of knowledge, drop down to his heart as inspiration, then reach his feed, bleed out his toes, and get his legs moving!”

Remember, our goal is not necessarily to become a big church in numbers, but a church that has true spiritual impact.

**The point of an irresistible Church is never to simply see its members attend church each week and do nothing. Its to attend, be equipped, and then go out and live purposeful lives for God. A church must be a place where disciples gather----and then scatter!**

Now we will begin to talk about the traits of the irresistible church. Today we will only talk about the first trait. And remember, the solution starts with you guys- because a church is not just made of the building, or the priests, so when we as a people change, the entire church will change.

**Trait 1- An Irresistible Church Hungers for the Presence of God**

*Story about the pastor in Hawaii who was so worried about it not raining, but not about the presence of God. P.24 or story of the showing of the passion in Kenya.*

* Sometimes we are more concerned about the absence of problems than we are about the presence of God.
* God is already present everywhere in the universe, and everything is in His presence, so what does this mean?

Hungering for the presence of God means having a **greater realization for God’s Presence.**

***John 4 “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but which endures to everlasting life.”***

Hungering for the presence of God means **longing to be filled to full measure with His Holy Spirit.**

* We are filled with the Holy Spirit when God occupies every part of our lives. He guides and controls us, and we can start to see the fruits of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Gal. 5:22-232But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Hungering for the presence of God may include **a special anointing for a special task at a specific time.** (ie mission trip, passion retreat, outreach visit)

Psalm 145: 18. The Lord *is* near to all who call upon Him,
To all who call upon Him in truth.

As a church that hungers for the presence of God, our focus shouldn’t be on facilities, big budgets, great programs, or large attendance, it should focus on the work of the Holy Spirit and for God’s presence to be felt and experienced. **IF GOD IS THE CENTER OF OUR MISSION AS A CHURCH, THERE IS NO POINT TO DO ALL THE THINGS THAT WE DO.**

**What can be done practically to make God’s presence more evident in our church:**

1. **Recognize it**

**Let’s look at the warning signs that are evidence of a lack of God’s presence. Look at yourselves first before you look at the person next to you.**

* + ***Fruitless****. Is our church bearing fruit? Do we see the fruits of the Holy Spirit? Love, joy, peace, etc. Do we see a lot of changed lives?*
	+ ***Wordless*** *Do we have a relationship with the word of God? With our Bibles?*
	+ ***Careless*:** Do we care about spiritual things or have we lost our excitement about them?
	+ ***Visionless:*** Are we more interested in the logistics of the church or meeting friends than in our church’s spiritual impact? Do we concern ourselves with the souls of the people in our church and where they will spend eternity?
	+ ***Missionless:*** Are we more concerned about just getting through the doors of church and coming on Sundays than we are about being equipped in order to be “sent out” to serve the world.
	+ ***Purposeless:*** Do we worry more about how the Church looks to others rather than how obedient we are as a church? Valuing performance and image above heart.
1. **Work on it by syncing our hearts with Heaven**
	* Regularly plugging our heart into heaven’s heart so that what God sees.We do this by creating a SPIRITUAL RULE.

Acts 10:9-13 9The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. 10Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance 11and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. 12In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. 13And a voice came to him, “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.”

* + We want whatever is on God’s heart to be on our heart.
	+ People always ask, how do we know what God wants? We will never know what is on someone’s heart if we don’t spend time with them on a REGULAR BASIS.
	+ God revealed to Peter what was on His heart- to start reaching out to the Gentiles- because Peter was diligent about seeking Him and being in sync with Him.
	+ Let us all commit to a regular spiritual cannon that we can discuss with our Fathers of confessions or spiritual guides and see what God puts on our hearts as His church.

**God is looking to bless churches that are filled with people who are looking for His presence. Let us come to church, come to liturgy, seeking and asking for Him to make us aware of His presence among us. Let us not just do our quiet time and prayers to get them done, but let us have a renewed spirit of seeking His presence during these moments.**

Hebrews 12: 1-2 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us runwith perseverance the race marked out for us.

As we do this, and hunger for His presence, He will reveal Himself to us and our church in amazing ways.